

## BY THE WAY—

In a Sunday magazine some few years back we read a touching paper on "Frances Ridley Havergal," by Mary Harrison, and were so struck by it that we made the following extracts which may throw some light on the question propounded by E. A. in the September Review as to "Hell Fire."

"F. R. H. had none of the weariness and languor and unnatural talk which are so often ascribed to the 'pious' child. She was neither maudlin nor mopish. Her limbs were always moving, her heart was bounding and free. She liked tree-climbing and wall-scaling, and clearly gave her mother some special anxiety because of the strength of her will and the temperature of the blood that always boiled in her veins. She had often tears and scars and bruises for her liberties. . . . Her religion came to her in her own constitutional way, chiefly through sunbeams falling through leafy trees and on waving grasses. God was so good! She was not yet eight years old when towards this happy way to religion she was led by Cowper's line, 'My Father made them all.' Her womanhood's songs all ring with this gladness in boughs and brightness which marked her dawning childhood. Light and green were her companions and playmates. It was her Father's gifts she owned and enjoyed. How good was God!

"Then came a very different note from the pulpit—a sermon—which muddled her little mind for years. To the last day of her life, indeed, she never wholly forgot; it startled her. It was about the Father she had begun to see in the pretty orchard blossoms into which she climbed and the sunny air of the sky. He had a terrible Judgment and Hell, she was told, to which for one sin He would send everybody. What could a little child, in a short frock and with a sometimes naughty heart, up in a tree, hope from one like that! Henceforth, God was no more the God of her climbs and her swings on the orchard boughs. It was no longer the terrible thing to fall off a wall on to the ground; that would not be the end of it. If she was killed the fall would be 'into "the Hand of the living God!"' His touch! It was a fearful thing! 'The sermon haunted me day and night,' she says; 'no one ever knew.' Her sunny thoughts of God were gone. Hardness, fierceness, terribleness, these He was; and they begot a child's agony. She prayed now 'a good deal with a sort of fidget and impatience,' almost angry at what made her so unhappy. That name, 'the Living God,' haunted her as no stories of goblins haunt. She did not like talking about Him. The kindly admonitions of her mother 'I utterly abominated,' she says. A chapter in the Bible became 'a terrible bore.' 'Sunday books' roused in her 'uncomfortableness.' She liked to pray by herself and felt 'less naughty' and soothed by the exercise. She went

through all this torture—a child—alone, with, somehow, the Father with her, through the quiet, everyday beauty of trees and sunshine. From womanhood she looked back with envy on her childhood's vivid sense of Nature's beauty. . . . But, alas! too early, by the 'fearful thing' with which (perverting language) . . . her young mind was scared—thoughts of the 'goodness of God,' as St. Paul calls it, which lead to repentance and Calvary and Heaven, were almost destroyed. Hauntings of 'Hell and Judgment' were substituted to *drive* her there. God's world was not the same to her now. . . .

"(At length) she found what are the hands in which all living live, in which all dying die—those hands of the living God; not hard hands, like the hands at a scaffold; not, as she had thought, hands which could grip a child that had torn its frock in climbing a tree, and thrust it for sin into Hell; but a tender Hand, tender as the hand that, when she was two years old, had lifted her on a father's knee, and held her affectionately to his side. . . . It was all peace to be in His hands; His hands were in Christ's. Those wounded hands were His. . . .

"All the while nobody seems to have suspected that she had any religious life at all. Millions of children live the same kind of lonely seeking after God. They are called 'naughty' at home, that is all; they are told of Hell at church or Sunday-school, or at best of a God who has not one characteristic which moves a little child's heart to music. God knows them well, sees them on their knees at night, feels for their little spirits in prison, which nobody 'visits.' And so they go for years, till faith dies. God will have a reckoning for all such. They have been so 'fidgetted' and made so 'impatient.' They have been 'haunted,' and 'harassed,' and 'crossed.' Of the God who is as full of tenderness to a child as a father is full of tenderness to his baby daughter they never hear; the God and Father of the preaching and faith of Jesus, the only living and true God, to Him they are wholly strangers. Ideas of superstition, of Judaism, and of Paganism, these are allowed to wear His name. . . .

"But neither the silence of the clergy nor their lack of understanding when they spoke destroyed the child's vague feeling after God, if haply she might find Him, and get over and rid of the horrible 'uncomfortableness' of the thought of Him.

"It was the Rectory garden, it seems, that kept her hoping. Its trees and grasses were 'the first pleasant leaf in God's lesson-book,' she says. And the second seems to have been clouds and sky, which, when shut in a town rectory, she 'could see from her window.' She did not moon and dream over them. She simply looked at them, and there seemed nothing between her and them. They were God's clouds and sky. Yet she was hindered from fellowship with their Maker and hers, and was wretched in her little self, and cried bitter tears about it. 'My general notion was,' she says, 'that I didn't love God at all; and was very bad and wicked altogether.' So she was taught. 'I thought,' she says, 'that if I went on praying very much, something would come and change me all at once, and make me like many whom I read about.'

"It has been the fate of millions of children to be thus sent to the treadmill and purgatory of souls by pulpit messages. The writer of this

paper was one amongst the most pitiable of the number. Children in prison! Babies almost, condemned felons! . . .

"'Waving boughs and golden light always touched and quieted me, and spoke to me, and told me about God,' she says. The pulpit fretted her. These 'touched and quieted' her with a peace which the hauntings of that sermon had not power wholly to break.

" . . . It is the power of simple faith in Jesus which casts out all Pagan notions of deity, and banishes darkness, and lies, and hauntings, and teaches the heart to say fearlessly and nothing doubting, 'Oh, God, my own Father.' . . .

"Little children and the God and Father of Jesus can live together as they live with their earthly father and their little neighbour. It is not *His* God that makes such havoc of the fairest hopes and joys of childhood, as did that to which Frances Ridley Havergal awoke when she was not yet in her sixth year."

VERA.—"From a Mother's Note Book."

## OUR WORK.

*The House of Education* has begun work, but we have not students enough to meet the applications for "Tante" in December, 1892. Are there no other earnest-minded, cultivated young women prepared to join us immediately? We can promise them remunerative and infinitely useful careers.

The *Parents' Review* School is always open to new pupils; so are the Bücherbund and the Fésole Club.

Will all of our readers who desire to give away the volume of the *Parents' Review* for March, 1891—1892, order at once of the publishers? We earnestly beg our readers not to relax their efforts to get new subscribers.

## NOTES AND QUERIES.

As you know so much what is right and good about education, I wish you would tell me what is the usual rule about schoolboys' evening meal in sensible families. My husband has a mania for having the children down from the earliest years to late dinner. He was brought up in the scrambling style of an Irish family, where the children were *en evidence* from morning till night. I do not think the practice is healthy, either morally or physically. I have now two boys, thirteen and fourteen, who regularly dine late, but I cannot think it a good thing for them to be eating rich food, being encouraged in pertness and forwardness, allowed to monopolise the conversation, and hearing a great deal of gossip that is not meant for children, which must naturally be the case when we have a large party of visitors, as we do through nearly the whole of the summer holidays and at Christmas. As I never allow my girls to be alone without either their own or a holiday governess, there is always schoolroom supper, and it seems to me that is the fitting place for such young boys. I wish you would tell me what is usually done in large households where there is a good deal going on in holiday times.

[We shall be glad to have this question discussed.—ED.]

My object in troubling you with this letter is to ask you or one of your contributors to say something on the subject of Bible reading. I have a preparatory school here of some forty-five boys between nine and fourteen, and am most anxious to instil a habit of regular and definite Bible reading among them all. At present most of them belong to the Boys' Scripture Union, but I must confess that I am not altogether satisfied with the portions selected, nor with the daily notes upon them in our Boys' Magazine. I have been wondering, therefore, if you and others of the P.N.E.U. could help me with suggestions on the subject, or whether we could get a good committee formed to draw up a list of passages which should last, say, for two years, and add to them short practical notes on each daily portion. Perhaps you might think well to put some query or suggestion bearing on the subject in your February issue if you have still space for it, and we should then see how the idea was received.

H. B.

### *A Smyrna rug for a baby to lie upon.*

When one of my friends asked, "What shall I make for your baby?" a happy inspiration prompted me to say, "A Smyrna rug to kick upon." Having found the rug most useful I thought it my duty to report it to other mothers. The rug is 36 inches square, has a cream-coloured centre, and a